

**FOCUS ON BUSINESS CARD
COLLECTORS**

APPEAL

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

SECTION C

By Jeff McAdory



Steve Collins shows off two of his favorite cards from his collection: a signature card from President Reagan and a foil-embossed foldover business card from a Rolls-Royce dealer in Houston.

Business cards grab him

TV executive has collected them since his youth

By Peggy Reisser
Staff Reporter

Steve Collins' calling card is simple. Under his name and address is his description — "Human Being."

He's seen cards plainer, and he's seen them fancier. But for Collins, a collector of business cards, this one does quite nicely.

By profession an advertising executive with WPTY-Channel 24, by avocation, a scavenger of business cards old and new, the 29-year-old has amassed a cache of the tiny paper promoters totaling more than 50,000.

"Any card is good to me," Collins said. "I've picked them up off parking lots where a jeep has run over them and they look like they have nefarious organisms on

them."

His card-collecting yen dates back to grade school. "I was in the eighth grade, and a fellow sitting next to me was collecting business cards. I thought that was sort of a neat thing to do, so I started collecting them."

"By the time I had twice as many cards as he had, he gave me his," Collins said.

Friends, relatives and other collectors have been giving and selling him cards ever since.

He's got business cards from Bangladesh and Hong Kong, from Houston and Dry Prong (Louisiana, that is, population around 350). "I'm saving them because it's a hobby, something to do, something I enjoy," Collins said. "It's a little bit of art, a little bit of history, a little bit of geography all rolled into one."

But when you're talking about a collection of objects that people give away, a little bit of wealth it isn't. "The only things I've got worth anything are the ones I've bought," Collins said, referring to several antique cards dating back about 100 years and bought for a dollar or two at flea markets.

From the past, there's Otto Wagner's card promoting him as a "Manufacturer of Real Ostrich Feathers" on Sixth Avenue in New York City.

There's a card distributed by Harry H. Koach, dealer in fine shoes, with an 1879 calendar on the back. There's a card from Levi Brothers Tailors in Philadelphia, beckoning customers from another era to purchase \$15 suits "your choice of pat-

Please see **COLLINS**, Page C2

“Any card is good to me. I’ve picked them up off parking lots.”

Meet Steve Collins, whose collection of calling cards contains more than 50,000. Some are on exhibit at the library. Peggy Reisser, Page C1.

From Page C1

Collins

terns.”

From the present, Collins has a card stamped with the White House and a signature of President Reagan. The flip side tells anyone who didn't guess that the writing on front is "a facsimile signature of Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States."

Collins, who recently moved with his wife and two daughters to Memphis from Houston, likes nothing better than to show off his cards.

A sample of Collins' collection is on exhibit in the art department at the Main Library, 1850 Peabody through the end of October. Ever the collector, he invites viewers of the exhibit to drop off a card to join the rest.

In the 15 years he's been collecting, Collins has managed to

gather quite a bit of information about how the cards, that every businessman takes for granted today, originated.

"They used to be calling cards. People had their names imprinted on them, and the cards were left at the doorstep to say, 'I came by,'" Collins said.

Next came trade cards, on which manufacturers advertised and described products, like medicines and elixirs.

"After that, the retail businesses started picking up on it, putting the name of their company and phone number and a little bit of something about themselves and what they sold."

In an age when businessmen and retailers wonder how to get their message across faster, are business cards advertising dinosaurs?

Collins doesn't think so. From the looks of his current specimens, he's got plenty of ways to prove it.

By Jeff McAdory



Steve Collins' collection includes many elaborate trade cards, some a century old, advertising products and services.

When It Comes To Ephemera — Wisconsin Woman Collects It All

by Glenn Kerfoot

If you've never known anyone with a collection of more than two million pieces, meet Pearl Schultz of Appleton, Wis. In fact, Pearl is well on her way to her third millionth bit of ephemera!

"Actually, Pearl would like to have one of everything in the world," patiently explains her husband Fred, a retired farmer. To prove his statement he points to her collections of 102,000 business cards, 42,000 postcards, 35,000 postmarks, 14,000 seals, 8,000 paper napkins, 4,500 place mats, 6,000 playing cards, 3,500 coasters, 3,200 sugar sacs, 2,500 United States stamps, 2,500 advertising pens and pencils, 1,200 view folders, 1,200 bookmarks, 1,200 newspaper mastheads, 900 first day covers, 750 covered bridge items, 750 calendar cards, 600 handkerchiefs, 450 pot holders, and hundreds of match covers.

At one time she owned more than 70,000 match covers, 12,000 buttons, 3,000 letterheads, and a huge collection of foreign postage stamps, but she sold these to devote more time and space to other interests.

"Right now my largest, and favorite, collection is business cards," Pearl says. "When we retired in 1971 we started traveling around the United States, and I kept getting these interesting little cards."

We found them everywhere — at home and garden shows, farm equipment exhibits, antique shops, flea markets, restaurants, hotels and stores. We even picked up a few at the national sports plane fly-ins at Oshkosh. Well, I just couldn't bear to throw them away and before I realized it I had another collection going. Next, friends started saving them for me and one woman gave me more than 700 she'd been hoarding for years."

For many years Pearl has advertised for business cards, with a standing offer of 20 cents for 10 of the same card as well as the sender's postage. "I like to get 10 of the same card," she explains, "so I can do some horse-trading with other collectors."

Frequently she receives packages or cards from anonymous donors who see her name in an advertisement, and a few business firms have sent their cards just for the fun of having them in a collection. Although the majority are simply a few lines of type on plain white stock, she occasionally finds something novel. She owns cards shaped like barrels, tea cups, bowling balls, sausages and other objects, and foldup cards turn up often. In addition to paper, cards are printed on plastic, metal, cloth and other materials.

A recent acquisition is an older card bearing the name of Vernon Castle, the famous dancing star of the 1920s, which came in with about 2,000 others in response to an ad. Another bears the name of the late Colonel William Lambert, America's second leading ace of World War I, who flew with Castle.

Her postcard collection has examples from all 50 states, carefully divided into categories such as flowers, fruit, churches, presidents, restaurants, and comics. An unusual item is a disaster card showing a little schoolhouse floating down the Ohio River in a 1908 flood. "The great thing about postcards," she maintains, "is that when I read about a place I've never been to I can open up my card album and find something from that place. A postcard collector can do a lot of traveling without leaving home."

Her match cover mania dates from a train trip 40 years ago. "I was coming home from a visit to North Dakota when the conductor came through passing out advertising matchbooks. The covers had a bright metallic sheen and were so pretty I had to keep one. Shazam! Another collection. I decided to stop when I reached 10,000, but I couldn't. When I got to 70,000 I sold them all . . . but I've started up again, of course."

A member of several collecting fraternities, Pearl believes in keeping her materials organized. She keeps everything neatly filed and often stays up past midnight reading, writing, sorting, filing, and corresponding. "It takes a lot of time," she says, "but there's no point in having hobbies if you don't work at them."

Although retired, Fred Schultz does not share his wife's interest in collecting, choosing to devote his time to hunting and fishing. When they retired, the Schultzes sold their land, livestock and farm buildings but continued to live in their rambling 10-room house. "We had to stay," Fred says, sighing. "With Pearl's collections, how . . . and where . . . could we move?"

From #91 ABCCL

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P.A.C.

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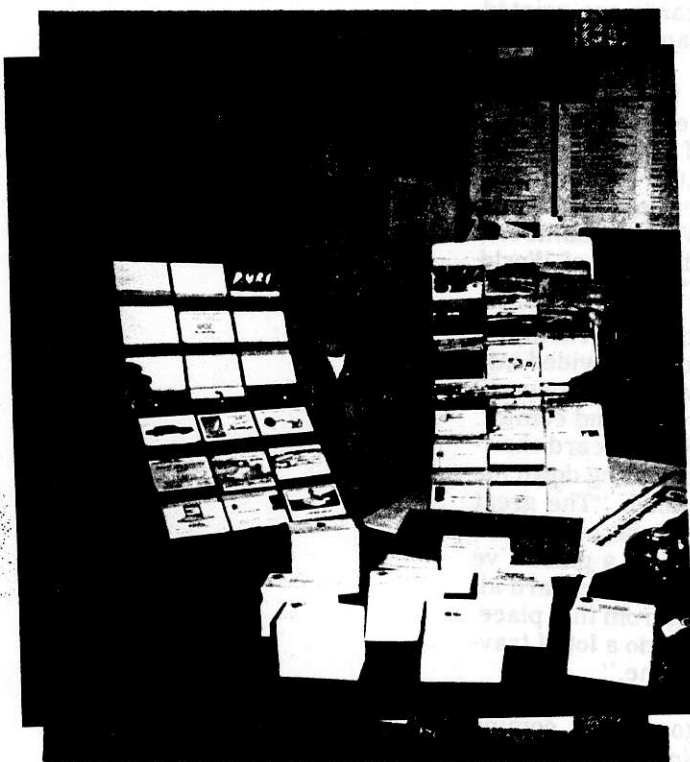


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POPULAR COLLECTIBLES - Business cards, old calling cards, trade cards, and many others of a similar nature have become popular collectibles. Darrell L. Christopher, at left, business card collector and enthusiast of Michigan, has thousands of cards. He has generously provided a variety for P.A.C. Upper right is an old "business" card which promotes Nolt's Coal of Lancaster, Pa. At bottom right is a "celebrity" card which carries Neil A. Armstrong's name and designates his association with the aviation industry. For more information on business cards as a collectible, see the story on page one of P.A.C.

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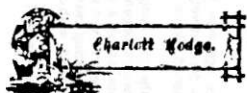


Published by Joel Haler

Let's Collect Business Cards!

by Darrell Christopher

A relatively new hobby, that of collecting business cards, is rapidly growing in popularity. Why? Business cards can be found in every corner of the world, but most of all business cards are FREE for the asking. It's a fact that most people are



ORIGINAL CALLING CARD - This card, from the 1800's, was a calling card for Charlotte Hodge.

honored when you request their card and are happy when told you collect business cards and want their personal card for your collection. Collecting an item that is in such abundance is fun, exciting and rewarding.

THEY'RE NOT NEW!

Business cards are not new by any means. They have been around for hundreds of years and can be found in many museums and paper antique collections. Antique cards are the most prized cards for business card collectors.

In America, as early as the late 1800's, the rural population used what were then known as "Calling Cards." The roads were rough and sometimes treacherous - making it difficult to travel to ones family, neighbors or friends. Most people worked 18 to 20 hours a day (usually in the fields or working the farm) and visitors came by infrequently. When a caller arrived and no one was home, the cards were left to show that a visitor had been and gone. These calling cards were the beginning of the modern business card.

The cards were colorful, filled with flowers, often embossed and had the caller's name and usually contained a brief message - such as "with my regards." These antique business cards came in all shapes and sizes. They were highly popular and it could be said the modern business card started with calling cards.

POCKET-SIZED CARDS

A little later on, a merchant decided the sign over his shop door did not reach enough people and he asked a printer to make up small pocket-sized cards listing his address and

business. His idea turned out to be a winner; for the merchant's cards were passed on from customer to customer and even got to different cities. These early cards were engraved or from woodcut dies - looking like miniature billboard signs. Some had elaborate ink drawings and most were cluttered with information about the business.

The cards give us insight into that time period for they reveal what types of businesses there were then - anvil salesmen, silversmiths, candle-makers, politicians, entertainers and so on.

WHERE TO FIND THEM?

The first thing a would-be collector needs to know is where to find the business cards. The exciting thing about collecting these cards is - they can be found just about anywhere! Let's start with old or historical cards. Antique stores or dealers often have cards in their inventories. Another good source for old cards is a flea market or garage sale. Estate sales are another source. You should also take a look through your own old boxes of papers - you might find some antique business cards there!

Collectors often advertise for old cards in collectors' magazines. If going this route, your advertisement should ask people to send cards to you for a quoted price. When you receive the cards, look them over and give the person a quote. When you agree on a price, send the money; if you can't come to an agreement, return the cards. It costs money for the advertisement but the advantages of getting some "mint" old cards at a reasonable price is worth it.

If you are seriously searching for particular types of cards the best way is to trade with other business card collectors. This is done through the mail. For a minimum of postage you can trade up to 20 cards each exchange. A request for your preference will help you and the person you trade with build your collections.

If a company you know goes out of business, talk to the owner and ask for his business cards - you could get a large number of them!

MODERN-DAY CARDS

Modern day cards are easier to find. About 95 percent of all businesses have cards and they want you to have them. Normally a couple of cards should be enough for a collector; one card for the collection and one card for trading.

Another source of cards is people

As a collector, you should have your own cards. All you have to do then is ask other people if they have cards and set up a trade. It's a good way to meet people and get cards at the same time.

Shopping malls are a great source for cards, especially when there are some displays set up for artists, auto dealers, craftspeople, etc. Sometimes you can really hit a bonanza! Grand openings and local fairs are other good places to find cards.

WHO COLLECTS CARDS?

A natural question is, who in the world collects business cards? The list is endless but here are a few. People who collect paper ephemera of any kind such as paper money, stamps, matchbooks, viewcards, are in many cases likely to also have a sizable stack of business cards in their collections.

Historical buffs are another group who are likely to have some rare Victorian calling cards or business cards in their collections. Remember, business cards are FREE, so many young children will pick them up wherever they are and throw them into a box of keepsakes at home. They may not realize it but they also have a start in this new hobby.

Our ever increasing population of retirees also keep most of the cards they have accumulated over the years. Even well-to-do people keep cards of celebrities and personalities they meet as souvenirs or mementos. Antique dealers will most definitely include old business cards as part of their inventory. Check your local museums. You might be surprised to see some business cards as part of the displays.

Let's not forget politicians as a source of obtaining these cards. They keep cards sent to them for possible contacts and in a few years' time could amass a large collection.

Then, too, businessmen keep the cards they receive and use them to improve their own business - thus building a large collection. So you see, business card collectors are everywhere.

CLUBS FOR COLLECTORS

All hobbies have their clubs and for business card collectors it's the



Lady Fingers

UNIQUE, UNUSUAL CARD - Collectible cards fall into many categories - such as this Lady Fingers card which certainly fits "unique and unusual." The card promotes the business of Terry in Rhode Island and is for sculptured nails, nail coating, and manicures...by appointment only.

American Business Card Club. The club, which is now four years old, averages about 150 members located in the United States, Canada, Great Britain and Scotland.

The average age for members is around 37 years old; age range is eight to 74. Some people have been collecting cards for less than a year and one member has collected for more than 30 years. The average size of a collection in the club is about 12,000 cards - the smallest being about 200 and the largest at more than 120,000 cards! If you added up all our collections together (which I did) we have more than a half-million cards.

Cards are traded through the mail in groups of 20 to 100 cards at a time.

The club has a newsletter called "Card Talk" which is published six times a year and gives members the

BUSINESS CARDS

(continued from page 1)

latest news and notes about the hobby and also gives them an outlet to advertise their wants and needs. Many members also collect other items - such as stamps, viewcards, matchcovers, and so on. They will trade each other for their preferences. Many trades consist of an exchange of business cards for used stamps and the reverse.

The club is planning its first convention in 1986.

TYPES OF CARDS COLLECTED

What types of cards are collected? Business cards, like many other collectibles, have been categorized according to collecting preferences. The major categories include antique, advertising, animals, artists, autos, banks, celebrity, entertainment, food, hotels/motels, historical, military, foreign, plastic, shapes, travel, unique/unusual, vertical, real wood and metal.

PRACTICAL ASPECTS

Business card collecting has practical advantages. The first is the ability to trade cards through the mail at low postage cost. Another nice feature is that the cards require limited storage space. Hardly any cards measure more than three by five inches and some not more than one by three inches.

Let's collect business cards. If you are interested, you can get information about joining the American Business Card Club by contacting Darrell Christopher through PAC. Write: Darrell Christopher, Business Cards, c/o PAC, P.O. Box 500, Mount Joy, PA 17552.

ANSEL CLASSIC

WASHINGTON, D.C. An exhibition of the museum set, 75 of the finest images produced by Ansel Adams (1902-1984), the renowned 20th century American photographer, goes on view October 6 through January 12, 1986, in the West Building Ground Floor Galleries of the National Gallery of Art, Fourth Street at Constitution Avenue, Washington, D.C.

The museum set was selected by Ansel Adams during the last five years of his life to represent the highest quality of his artistic achievement. This is the first museum exhibition in America of the full museum set. These photographs will be shown with a group of rarely seen large images, mural prints and screens, which are being loaned by Mrs. Ansel Adams and others.

Ansel Adams' Classic Images is made possible by a grant from Pacific Televis, a leading telecommunications corporation based in California.

The museum set includes many of Ansel Adams' most famous photographs including *Moonlight, The Face of Half Dome* (1927), *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico* (1931), *Clearing Winter Storm, Yosemite Valley, California*.

P.A.C. wishes to extend its faithful readers. This traditional thanks to you - our faithful men for a happy Thanksgiving. Let's

LANCASTER HAT CO
HATS AND CAPS

SCULLY-LENGER 115 PRINCE ST

OLD BUSINESS CARD - This card, circa 1930's, is a business card from the past and promotes Lancaster Hat Company, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Notice the phone number 383-R.



DARRELL CHRISTOPHER
P.O. Box 500
Mount Joy, PA 17552
Business Card Collector

American Business Card Club

COLLECTORS' CARD - Many business card collectors carry their own "business cards." Here is Darrell Christopher's personal card which gives the ABC's of the American Business Card Club!

Hobbies



Steve Collins keeps his collection indexed and filed away.

The last time someone asked salesman Steve Collins for his card, he had to laugh.

It's not because business was so bad or it's not because business was so bad. No, Collins had to laugh because as one of a growing number of business card collectors he has amassed a collection of 50,000 individual cards and has become owner of the third largest collection in the country. So he laughs.

"I've been doing this for 15 years," he said in his Houston home where the collection is stored, displayed, stacked and packed. "It actually started when I was in the eighth grade and a friend of mine said he was collecting business cards. I thought that sounded interesting so pretty soon I had 15 cards. He had eight. Finally he gave me his cards and went on to something else. Percentage-wise, that was the largest acquisition I've ever gotten."

The collection has obviously multiplied, but even Collins admits it isn't a hard thing to do when the item being collected is something just about everybody gives away. "I'm really looking for quantity, not just quality."

That's not to say he hasn't acquired and even paid for a few cards which are the prize of the collection. He has business cards from a number of notables including the Postmaster General Albert Casey ("There's no address and no phone number."), T. Boone Pickens and a number of governors, celebrities and sports figures.

He also has a number of antique cards, one of which is his personal favorite. It is an ornate, beautifully crafted card from Bloomingdale's dating from around the turn of the century. Another favorite is a classy antique from an area Rolls Royce dealer.

The quest for more cards led Collins to take out an advertisement in a national magazine last year. In it he asked anyone interested in trading business cards to contact him. "I thought if I got 10 to 12 replies I ought to start a club," he chuckled. "The first reply I got was from Darrell Christopher, the founder of the

It's all in the cards

Collector gathers 50,000 business cards



Post photos by John Makely

Business cards come in many different varieties, as shown by some of Collins' favorites.

American Business Card Club."

Touting a national membership of only about 200, the club doesn't brag on its size, but it has expanded enough in the nearly four years since it began to have a bimonthly newsletter and an annual convention. "There are also a lot more people out there who collect business cards who probably don't know about the club," Collins said. "We're not a lot different than those who collect matchbook covers, and this is a field that's still in its infancy."

Business cards have an uncertain beginning, to be sure. Most people say they got their beginning among

the gentry centuries ago who had the practice of leaving their names decoratively printed on calling cards when they visited. Some of these were truly ornate.

Others attribute the true business card to the last century when businesses began using trade cards, small advertisements listing a product or the business. Afterwards these evolved into the cards people are used to today, including cards with calendars on the back. Collins has cards with calendars going back to 1875.

Others find the business card something traceable



Some unique business card designs are kept in plastic wrap.

back to the earliest times of man, saying the guy who started painting on the cave wall was in essence leaving his calling card.

Regardless of when they began, however, there's no question business cards are a universal thing. "I've got cards all the way from Russian and China to Dry Prong, Texas," Collins said.

He once alphabetized the collection by company, but has recently been in the process of dividing the cards by country, state, city and then company. While the time it takes to do this hasn't made it easy, it has given him a good count on the number of cards he owns.

Anxious to get others involved in the hobby (there are a dozen or so collectors in the area), Collins is quick to note this is not a hobby to get into for the money. "I've never sold a card. I've bought a couple for like three or four dollars, but that's not often. You know, it's hard to put a value on something everyone has been giving away for free."

Asked if there's any particular cards he'd really like to get, Collins quickly names a man who would be the last guy in the world to need one.

"Ronald Reagan. I've seen pictures of Ronald Reagan's card, and I've seen one of Jimmy Carters." It would seem Ronald Reagan would have plenty to spare. Not only does everyone know who he is, it's not hard to figure out where he lives.

And what kind of card does the man with 50,000 business cards carry himself?

"Well, all these cards have the name of the someone and then some long and fancy title," Collins said. "I figured I needed some kind of title, something to run after my name that everyone would remember. My card just says Steve Collins, Human Being."

Collins is in the process of moving to Memphis, Tenn., but to learn of other members in Houston and in the area, plus pick up any information about the hobby, write Darrell Christopher, 31759 Stricker, Warren, Mi. 48093.

— MARK HANNA

COLLECTING From C. WOLF BUSINESS CARDS

By Joyce Baldwin

Regular readers will recall that, a while back, Joyce Baldwin wrote us an interesting article about collecting fancy shopping bags as examples of modern graphic art. In the following essay, she continues her survey of contemporary collectibles, demonstrating the true collector's instinct for discovery.

I don't remember the first business card I picked up to start my collection, but I do remember a few reasons why my interest was aroused. First of all, as an inveterate shopper and browser in boutiques and other small shops, I often had difficulty in recalling the name or location of a particular establishment and found it embarrassing not to be able to remember these details when friends asked.

As an amateur potter, I was also interested in crafts and used to attend crafts shows and fairs frequently. Craftspeople are not only creative in designing and executing their wares, they also set their imagination free when designing the imprint for their business cards. I often found them too irresistible to ignore. Besides, as an antique buff, I often bought old and antique business cards, and it only seemed natural to pick up free contemporary examples.

There are many ways to

amass business cards. Some people collect only certain types of cards, e.i., those with embossed logos, or just hand-made cards, or only cards featuring some special item — chairs, for example. Others collect cards only as token, and free, souvenirs of trips. Business cards are usually prettier than matchbook covers and, some think, more sophisticated than mere trinkets. Certainly cards have an edge over decalced ashtrays or other such newsstand memorabilia. Most collectors, however are content to seek cards with handsome graphic detail whatever the motif.

You will probably collect most of the cards yourself. As you browse in a shop, be on the alert for a display of the owner's cards. Usually they are displayed near the checkout counter or cash register. If you don't see any, don't hesitate to ask. When I first began collecting, if I didn't see any cards, I would never ask for one, but the longer I continued collecting, the less shy I became in requesting them.

When I volunteer that I collect cards, shopkeepers usually express some interest in this hobby, and we will spend a few minutes in conversation about it. Proprietors are pleased to hear compliments about their establishments, and I usually take the time to comment on an unusual name or logo, telling them how it will fit into

my collection. Some stores don't have cards but instead distribute stickers, and I gladly accept these in lieu of cards.

There are also times when I write to companies requesting cards. In these cases, I always enclose a SASE (Self-Address, Stamped Envelope) and explain about my interest and how I happen to know about their company. Sometimes I see intriguing cards posted on bulletin boards, or on occasion spy an irresistible logo printed in a newspaper. If you enclose a prepaid envelope with your request, of course, the person in charge is much more likely to agree to your request for a card, for all he or she has to do then is slip it in the envelope and mail it.

Friends are another source of cards. Some of mine, especially those who live a distance away, often send me greeting cards bulging with free presents of business cards. It is always exciting to see what they have sent, for usually I wouldn't have the opportunity to find the examples they enclose. It's also fun to find cards for other collectors I know, so I always try to pick up extras to pass on. Of course, you can't have this arrangement with too many people! One friend, who is an antiques dealer, has access to many cards I would not otherwise know existed. Another friend, from France, delights in seeking out unusual European business cards and sending them across the Atlantic to me. Likewise, I find it fun to send her cards now and then from

places I think she might enjoy visiting on trips to the U.S. It's always intriguing to open her letters and try to figure out, with my very limited French, where in Paris this card came from and what wares this boutique is selling. It also helps me

recall walks on the Boulevard St. Michel or the Ile St. Louis.

If I have whetted your collector's appetite for investigating the new world of collecting business cards, there will always be some graphic surprise in your future. Enjoy the serendipity of it!

BELOW ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF COLLECTIBLE MODERN BUSINESS CARDS--



Business card boom

Exactly what prompted the conceit, I can't say.

After more than 30 years of reporting, I finally had some business cards printed.

Proudly, I handed "my card" to Daniel B. Hoffman, chief of the *Eagle-Times* editorial pages.

He appraised it stonily, then fastened me with low-slung eyeballs and gruffed, "This is blatant misrepresentation!"

"Wha-what?" I stuttered.

"Why — this," he said, mustering the indignity only an editorial writer can assume. "You're not the publisher of the *Reading Eagle Company*."

Thinking something was dreadfully amiss, I looked at the card in his hand: "Reading Eagle Company. Publisher of the *Reading Eagle* and the *Reading Times*. Ray Koehler."

"Uh, Mister Hoffman," I said hesitantly, "you've got your thumb over the word 'Reporter' that's printed under my name."

Hoffman turned the card back to me glowering — but I think I saw his lip curl in what passes for a smile.

THE INCIDENT occurred three weeks ago and so far only one person has asked me for my card.

That was Betty Laudenslager, a professional business card scrounger.

I remember the embarrassment as if it were yesterday.

I was talking to the Colony Park resident on the telephone and, trying to be helpful, I asked, "Would you like my card?"

Staff member Deirdre Riley muffled a laugh.

Were it not for Betty Laudenslager, I would be inclined to drop this whole matter and write about her scarf collection.

But there is a story here and I must be true to my profession.

After nine years of soliciting friends and strangers, Betty Laudenslager has accumulated more than 13,000 business cards.

It's not in the Guinness Book of World Records, but the acknowledged king of collectors, Larry Flink of Odebolt, Iowa, has 24,000 business cards — and he's looking to sell them.

So it could be that Mrs. Laudenslager within the next several years will own the largest collec-



Ray Koehler

Reading Eagle

tion of business cards in the entire civilized world.

The widow of the late prominent scout and former owner of Standard Roofing and Sheet Metal, Richard E. Laudenslager, the petite blonde has her business cards filed and indexed in 100 volumes in every imaginable category, including "No Addresses."

THE INCOMING deluge of business cards is so heavy that her indexing system is hundreds of cards in arrears.

With it all, Mrs. Laudenslager is quite modest about her collection.

She insists that any report of her activity contain the name of the recently organized Pretzel City Card Club, whose president is 10-year-old Melissa Sands of Fleetwood R.D. 5, Zip Code 19522. The Pretzel City group is an affiliate of the American Business Card Club.

One of the local members, LeRoy Gensemer, the jury commissioner and owner of Roy's Roofing, has 8,582 business cards, including those of singer Frank Sinatra and President Ronald Reagan.

"I wrote to 125 Hollywood stars," LeRoy said. "Frank was the only one who ever replied."

I asked Betty if she has a card to match Frank Sinatra.

"Mickey Mouse," the collector said emphatically. "That's the top of my line."

BETTY TOLD OF standing in a line to pay for purchases at Epcot behind a tall gentleman from England. Catching the Briton's eye, she asked: "Would

you happen to have a business card?"

"Why would you want a business card?" he replied.

"I collect them," Betty said.

"Well, I collect young girls' telephone numbers," the man replied.

"We laughed and chatted briefly and after he left, a clerk sidled up to me and asked in a low voice, 'Would you like to have this?'"

"It was a Mickey Mouse business card," Betty said. "Walt Disney Enterprises, Merchandising Division."

Perhaps the most interesting of the Laudenslager collection are her "Special Interest" volumes.

That includes such cards as one from The Rope Folks — Russell and Priscilla of Fleetwood. "We know the Ropes"; and from Bruce Mac Brien Sr., auctioneer, "You Yell — We'll Sell."

"EVERYWHERE I go I get cards," Betty said. "I go to church and someone will give me cards. Sunday school. The hair dresser. One girl collected business cards for me on her honeymoon."

"Probably the most disgusting thing happened at a hobby show," Betty went on. "This burly guy was doing woodworking and I asked him, 'Would you have a business card?' He said, 'No, and if I did have one I wouldn't give it to you.' I thought, 'Well, nuts to you, brother, because I wouldn't buy anything from you either!'"

Betty got into collecting business cards because she thought it might be fun. But collecting cards with people's names and businesses has nothing to do with it. "It's the personal contact and friends you make," she said.

Betty Laudenslager laughed: "I asked a friend who works in an office if she'd ask her associates to give her their business cards." "Oh, I couldn't do that," the woman said. "You know, they have to pay for those."

There is one business card in the collection whose origin intrigues me. "Love and Lust. The Moonlight Ranch. Chenelle, Calif."

"Where'd you get that one?" I wondered.

"I don't know," Betty shrugged. "Along the way."